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Supporting people through crisis



Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

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Introduction

This is one of a series of guidance notes for EU practitioners and their partners working at the intersection of social protection and humanitarian response. It explores how social protection can be provided across the humanitarian-development nexus with a specific focus on stakeholders that deliver social protection in both contexts. The note aims to be straightforward and provide practical and operational guidance rather than focus on the theoretical frameworks that underpin working across the humanitarian-development nexus or the 'nitty gritty' of specific, individual programme design (covered by other documents listed under references and resources, below. Note also EC 2018a, Section D3. 'Stakeholders').

Users of the guidance – staff working in EU delegations in developing and fragile / conflict-affected countries but also those in ECHO, DEVCO and NEAR operational desks and EU Member State (MS) practitioners – are increasingly challenged to respond to growing interest in routing humanitarian responses through social protection in order to more quickly, effectively and efficiently meet basic needs following a shock or disaster. At present there is evidence that using social protection can be faster, more efficient and efficient but this evidence base covers a limited set of country and programme contexts. Furthermore, trade-offs between humanitarian and development objectives are common and it is recognised, especially by practitioners on the ground, that using social protection for shock response is unlikely to be sufficient alone, and should be one part of a broader response. Before shocks happen, social protection is and can be used to reduce people's exposure to and mitigate the worst impacts of crises – essentially, social protection builds the resilience of poor and vulnerable households.

The guidance note aims to bring staff up to speed on the issue, help them acquire an understanding of the fundamentals (the rationale for deploying social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus, the main opportunities and challenges in seeking to do this, and the principles that might underpin policy and practical responses), and better equip them to tackle specific operational obstacles and barriers.

In order to do so, the guidance outlines the circumstances in which social protection can be realised across the humanitarian-development nexus (from here on in, 'SPaN') with a specific focus on the incentives, goals, roles and responsibilities, and coordination of different stakeholders. Across the globe and a range of different national contexts, there are many different constellations of stakeholder engagement in SPaN – with varying combinations of government ministries and departments, security and law enforcement organisations, donor agencies, NGOs and CSOs, and private sector actors' engagement. The note will map out these constellations, identify which might be more or less successful in different circumstances, and suggest what promising actions and forms of coordination might support stronger SPaN.

The note begins by outlining the emerging interest in Social Protection across the Humanitarian – Development Nexus and identifying the core focus of the note, namely, how EU and EU MS staff might work together on social protection in situations of crisis and what sorts of 'ways of working' might produce the best results. It then identifies some of the operational challenges in relation to stakeholder roles, responsibilities and coordination that emerge for practitioners seeking to deliver SPaN. The paper then provides practical guidance by demonstrating the lessons learned and promising practices from available case study evidence. Practical tips to support practitioners navigate specific challenging situations (for example when the state is party to a conflict, or has no capacity to respond to a disaster) are interspersed throughout. Outstanding knowledge gaps and questions about stakeholder roles, responsibilities and coordination that need addressing in order to improve SPaN are assessed, before concluding with some underpinning principles and recommendations that can provide an organising framework for future policies and practice.

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Stakeholders for Social Protection across the Humanitarian- Development Nexus: What's the issue?

In the past five years, global consensus has emerged that tackling the world's greatest challenges will require coordinated action by stakeholders working on poverty reduction and development, humanitarian responses, climate change and on building peaceful and stable societies (Box 1). This consensus is echoed at a European level with Council of the European Union conclusions on 'Operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus' (19 May 2017) welcoming cooperation between EU humanitarian and development actors. The contribution of SPaN to these broad global partnership aims also raises significant and challenging practical and operational questions about the roles, responsibilities and coordination of a multiplicity of stakeholders working on social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus:

Box 1: The importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships – a global consensus

The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) include an explicit focus on revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development ([Goal 17](#)) noting that: 'A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level'.



In relation to stakeholders, the [Sendai](#) Framework highlights the need for: the strengthening of disaster risk governance (including national platforms); accountability for disaster risk management; preparedness to 'Build Back Better'; recognition of stakeholders and their roles; and strengthening of international cooperation and global partnership.



Among the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit ([WHS](#)) in 2016 are a number of shifts in relation to stakeholders, including: developing solutions jointly with affected people; reinforcing (rather than replacing) national and local systems; transcending humanitarian-development divides; and investing in local capacities.

First, although it is clear that humanitarian and development worlds are moving closer together for a number of reasons (see Box 2), there remain some substantial differences between the two sets of stakeholders that have implications for coordination of actors. In particular, while the primary mantra in social protection is 'government-owned, government-driven', the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality can be at odds with working in partnership with governments. Partnerships between governments and humanitarian agencies are not impossible but they can be very difficult in practice. Conversely, choices at the national level about social protection – where it is targeted and to which people – are inherently political. So, notwithstanding the commitments made at WHS to reinforce rather than replace national and local systems, bringing humanitarian agencies and governments together can be especially challenging.

Box 2: The convergence of humanitarian and development policies and practices

The sharp division between humanitarian and development responses is increasingly blurring.

- Emergencies have become more protracted, some two thirds of international humanitarian assistance beneficiaries receive support for the long term (EC 2018a) and OCHA notes that 9 years is the average length of a humanitarian appeal.
- The growing use of cash transfers (rather than food transfers) in emergencies has brought greater alignment between the instruments of choice in humanitarian response and social protection.
- The focus of humanitarian action has for some time been on saving lives AND saving livelihoods and supporting recovery (particularly using cash or food-for-work programmes) while those working on social protection increasingly seek to be more responsive in the face of rapid-onset shocks.

Second, situations of crisis present particular operational challenges. The 'map' of stakeholders in crisis contexts can be opaque or difficult to decipher and it can change rapidly. This means that the most appropriate and effective distribution of roles and responsibilities delivering SPaN, the incentives of stakeholders and the best forms of coordination can also change very rapidly too. Furthermore, in many fragile and conflict-affected situations there may be stakeholders who are direct participants in the conflict (governments, armed wings of political parties, and security and justice organisations in particular), states may be 'predatory' or have weak capacity, and insurgents may be the first source of informal social protection at the local level. This raises challenges for humanitarian and development practitioners. Also, in post-conflict situations, there is often a perceived concern that the continued presence of humanitarian actors, especially NGOs, crowds out state building and undermines efforts to strengthen both state legitimacy and state capacity.

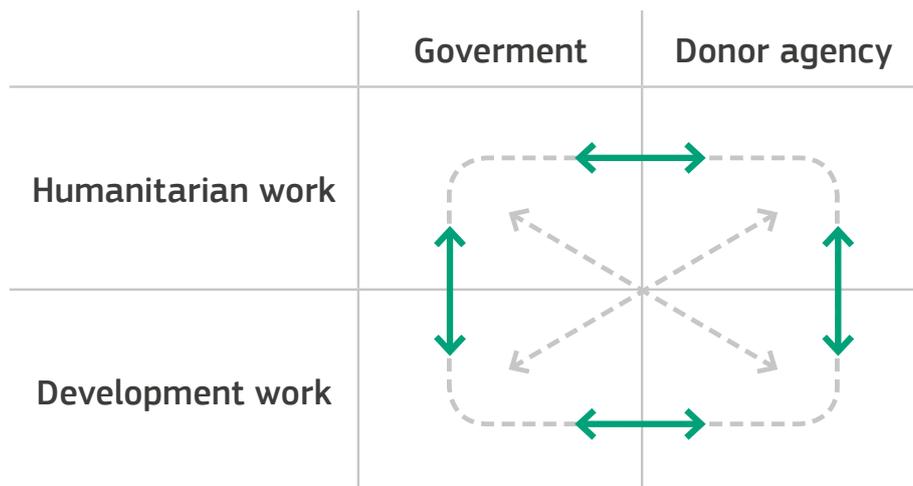
Third, the technical and financing environment is challenging. Competition for scarce funding and resources between humanitarian and development divisions – within governments, within donor agencies and within NGOs, and can lessen the incentive to cooperate and coordinate. Furthermore, information systems are often weak – providing poor-quality data about the needs of vulnerable people – and are poorly coordinated or difficult to share across organisations. As a result, '*most cash-based assistance for disaster-affected populations ... [continues to be] implemented by international organizations, often without government participation*' (Doocy and Tappis 2016: p. 58-59).

Fourth, the geographical overlap between humanitarian and development social protection is not as widespread as is often assumed. The EU evaluation of the use of different transfer modalities finds that national social protection or safety net systems are found in only a subset of ECHO's operational contexts and of a limited sample of ten countries where ECHO works on cash and vouchers, a third did not have national social protection programmes (Maunder et al. 2016). Where national programmes and systems do exist, the extent to which they are taken into account when planning is limited. The evaluation found that response proposals from ECHO's implementing partners in Ethiopia, Philippines and Kenya gave little consideration to national social protection systems in their design, particularly in the latter two cases.

Fifth, while the longevity of many humanitarian appeals and actions is increasingly recognised, there remain substantial differences between humanitarian and developmental social protection that relate to timelines. Timelines have a strong influence on programme design features. For example, a large share of social protection programmes are provided conditional on certain behaviours on the part of beneficiaries – enrolling their children in school, attendance at pre- or post-natal clinics, and inoculation of infants. Such conditionalities are rare in humanitarian response, where the priority is preventing the depletion of human capital rather than on building it. In practice, this means that, even in countries with substantial national social protection systems, the form and functions of the programme may not align well with humanitarian responses.

Overall, the solution to these challenges is, as FAO (2016, p. 16) note, *‘not simply a technocratic process of bringing together humanitarian and development instruments but involves reconciling fundamental differences’*. This includes differences between organisations that may have starkly different attitudes regarding equality and inclusion. Furthermore, this reconciliation is required across a complex web of relationships. Notwithstanding Gentilini et al.’s (2018: p. 2) assertion that *‘the interaction between international and national actors can be complex’*, Figure 1 provides a reduced view of that web of relationships and highlights ways in which humanitarian and development actors connect with one another. Limiting the stakeholders to government and donor agencies only, the figure highlights how, for example, development staff in donor agencies work with humanitarian staff in their own organisations and with development staff in partner governments. Similarly, humanitarian actors in government work both with humanitarians in donor agencies and with development actors in their own governments. International humanitarian agencies often have limited relationships and engagement with national governments: very little international humanitarian assistance (less than one-fortieth) is channelled through national governments (Gentilini et al. 2018 and Development Initiatives 2018) and *‘short funding horizons and limited ability to engage with governments, give ECHO [for example] a comparative disadvantage in directly supporting [national social protection] systems’* (Maunder et al. 2016: p. 28). As the figure shows, even if the horizontal and vertical connections are strong, they do not create a continuous whole and diagonal connections are weak, at best, and more often absent. The figure gets us to the root of the problem: **effective coordination for SPaN requires stakeholders to move beyond their existing ways of working, acknowledge wider goals and incentives and build new partnerships.** How can this be done? The next section draws on evidence from practical experience to identify promising practices from which transferable lessons can be applied and tested in other contexts.

Figure 1
Reduced stakeholder model across government and donor agencies



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Lessons from positive experiences in crisis contexts

A multiplicity of stakeholders

The operational challenges faced in working on social protection across the nexus are present in many countries, but various positive experiences have emerged in recent years that show where progress might be made. The primary lesson from across a range of countries and contexts is that effective programming across the nexus requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders including national and local governments, international donor agencies, international and local NGOs, CSOs and communities, and the private sector. Specific configurations of these various actors vary between contexts – depending on:

- the type of emergency (e.g. rapid or slow-onset, small or large number of people affected, short-term or protracted);
- the needs in specific sectors (health, shelter, education, water and sanitation, etc);
- the capacities of different actors/institutions (for example, do government departments have existing registries of poor and vulnerable households, or e-payment systems); and
- the extent and types of existing systems and procedures in place.

Two, contrasting examples are instructive:

In Ethiopia, systems are in place to expand the main social protection programme (the Productive Safety Net Programme – PSNP). In this case, the emergency tends to be associated with drought and this allows pre-positioned resources to be deployed to enable an increase in the transfers paid or the duration for which households receive support, and allows additional caseload of beneficiaries to be added temporarily to the programme. A substantial share of humanitarian response can be routed through the PSNP and depends on engagement between government, donor and NGO actors – including the provision of early warning data. Because PSNP is targeted based on food gaps in households, there are substantial overlaps between its beneficiaries and households experiencing drought.

In contrast, in Nepal, following the 2015 earthquake, the inclusion of social protection expertise in the emergency response was relatively modest. An emergency cash transfer top-up was provided some months after the earthquake to households already registered and receiving social protection. However, because the existing programmes target households primarily on the basis of demographic and social categories (age, ethnicity, disability) rather than poverty or vulnerability to disasters, they were less well placed to reach those most affected by the earthquake than other actions. The transfer also came too late to support immediate needs. Far greater emphasis was placed on support unrelated to the existing social protection system such as search and rescue, food, shelter and health and, as a result, a rather different configuration of actors emerged compared to Ethiopia.

REFLECTION:

A wide range of stakeholder participation is required to work across the humanitarian and development spheres but there is no single model – the configuration of stakeholders depends on the specific nature of the emergency, and of existing programmes (especially their targeting), systems and capacities.

Coordinating across a multiplicity of stakeholders

Statements about the importance of coordination of stakeholders are common in work on social protection in both the humanitarian and development spheres; for example, the Sendai Framework notes that working across disaster risk mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery requires *'coordination mechanisms within and across sectors and with relevant stakeholders at all levels, and it requires the full engagement of all state institutions of an executive and legislative nature at national and local levels and a clear articulation of responsibilities across public and private stakeholders, including business and academia'* (UNISDR 2015, p. 13). However, there is far less evidence about what the most promising mechanisms and systems for coordination are. A systematic review of cash-based responses in humanitarian situations found that despite the many studies finding coordination to be a key factor contributing to or hindering implementation of cash-based approaches, *'none of the studies ... provided evidence of what effective or ineffective coordination looks like'* (Doocy and Tappis 2016: p. 59).

Coordination is required at a number of different levels (global, national and local) and between numerous sectors. The risk is that there are simply too many actors to coordinate with in meaningful, constructive and effective ways. As Doocy and Tappis (2016: p. 59) note *'The importance of coordination is not unique to cash based approaches [in humanitarian situations], but challenges may be greater due to the fact that humanitarian coordination mechanisms are structured around sectors of intervention (including health, shelter, education) and cash can be used for many purposes (Ali, 2005; Aysan, 2008; Crisp, 2010; DiPetro, 2011; Dunn, 2011)*. Existing national social protection systems also have strong linkages into other sectors, creating a further set of potential development stakeholders – health, education, nutrition, infrastructure, livelihoods.

Again, the precise configurations depend on the specifics of local contexts but there are some emerging good practices from various locations – especially the identification of sectoral focal points and coordination leads in government agencies. The articulation of frameworks – that stakeholders can share and align to – is viewed as particularly important, especially where stakeholders are required to engage with new actors, such as the private sector, that have not traditionally been partners in social protection delivery. For Somalia, the SPaN Case Study 17 identifies the prerequisite steps for a long term framework and strategic plan and suggests that agreeing shared standard operating procedures and generating a *'convergence of policies and standards agreed between donors and government will lead to a more predictable and effective approach operating at scale'*. It also argues that a *'further prerequisite to developing a more coherent approach is improved collective donor coherence and capacity, built through convening a Donor Working Group'* (EC 2018b, p. 4).

REFLECTION:

In order that it does not become overwhelming, coordination of a broad range of stakeholders requires strong focal points, particularly in governments, shared procedures and clear policy frameworks that stakeholders can anchor to.

National governments at the centre – in principle and in practice

One area in which there is common agreement is that national governments should provide a focal point for coordination, and should lead stakeholders in delivering social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus. This principle is backed up by many commitments, for example, in the WHS to reinforce rather than replace national processes. In practice, weak government ownership and leadership capacity is proving difficult – with a number of situations in which it may be challenging to uphold these principles, but nonetheless should be strived to be achieved.

Where there is limited government capacity, and in the absence of substantial progress being made to strengthen national and local government systems for social protection delivery, it may be necessary to seek out alternatives to delivering directly through government. Gentilini et al. (2018) draw on the example of the Ebola crisis in Liberia to argue that in countries with only fledgling national social protection capacity, there are limited opportunities to use local systems in a meaningful way.

Also important, particularly in countries with active violent conflict, is a plan for moving from ‘government-led but not government-implemented’ humanitarian programmes, towards ‘government-owned, financed and implemented’ social protection in the long term. In Somalia, for example, the SPaN Case Study 17 argues that effective donor coordination can provide ‘*Gains in effective planning, financing and coordination of a sustainable social assistance programme*’ and that working ‘*safety net programme in the short-term paving the way to a social protection approach in the long term*’ (EU 2018b, p.3)

There are also often circumstances where international humanitarian donor capacity in country may be limited or where it cannot work directly with government – either because the government is predatory, or because it is a party to violent conflict. In Yemen, the World Bank operates an Emergency Crisis Response Project (ECRP) but, because of the severely restricted World Bank presence in country, it works through the Yemen Social Fund for Development (SFD)’s operational apparatus allowing it to deliver in a broad range of geographical locations including those controlled by Houthi groups. In Yemen, the importance of having a local implementing partner that is viewed as relatively objective, neutral and impartial and with a good knowledge of the local community is viewed as paramount to the delivery of both long-term and emergency public works programming (Al-Iryani et al. 2015).

A state is predatory when those in power pursue policies that seek to maintain the political status quo rather than achieve economic development, poverty reduction and peace. (See Robinson’s 2001 paper, ‘What makes a state predatory?’)



PRACTICAL TIP

There are inherent trade-offs between building state capacity and strengthening state legitimacy through social protection. In conflict-affected situations where state **capacity** is the priority, it is important to deliver through government. Where state **legitimacy** is most important, the focus should be on high quality social protection delivery rather than delivering everything through the government.

Following a conflict, there is often substantial pressure on international humanitarian agencies to make way, borne of a concern that their continued presence ‘crowds out’ state building – especially the capacity and legitimacy of the state. In relation to state capacity, as noted in the 2018 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, there is still substantial work needed by international humanitarian agencies to ensure they contribute to building state capacity to sustainably deliver humanitarian assistance rather than crowding it out. SPaN Case Study 17 on Somalia highlights the tension effectively: ‘While channelling resources for social protection through [sic.] Government system might potentially improve state systems, delivery by international implementing partners is considered a lower risk. However, this does little to build capacity in Somali institutions, causes resentment and does not account for the risks and long-term effectiveness of not funding through Somali channels’ (EC 2018b, p.3).

However, regarding state legitimacy, emerging evidence from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium ([SLRC](#)) exploring livelihoods, service delivery and social protection in fragile and conflict-affected countries suggests some counterintuitive lessons. Rather than crowding out the germination of state legitimacy, SLRC find that the delivery of services and social protection by non-state providers has an inconsistent and negligible impact on it. SLRC’s longitudinal panel data from five conflict-affected areas in DRC, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda shows that delivering social protection and other services such as health, education and water through non-state providers does not undermine people’s perceptions of their governments. At the same time, problems with service delivery can have a very negative effect on people’s perceptions of governments, suggesting that the quality of services does matter. Thus, rather than automatically seeking to deliver social protection through government apparatus in order to achieve state legitimacy, the SLRC argue that in situations of fragility and conflict, the priority should be the quality of social protection delivery (transfers made in a reliable, timely manner, and at levels that can make a meaningful difference to people’s lives). It is how well social protection is delivered, rather than who delivers it, that really matters improving people’s perceptions of the state. Prioritising quality can still allow for a stewardship role to be played by governments but offers operational space for other actors with greater capacity to provide high quality services.

(Nixon and Mallett 2012, Slater and Mallett 2017)

In an example from the Central African Republic (CAR), the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) has sought to expand capacity strengthening and professional training project work outside the capital, Bangui, and into remote rural areas by working through AGETIP-CAF – a quasi-parastatal agency delivering public works that has a long standing presence throughout the country.

The experiences of the World Bank working with AGETIP-CAF also highlight how, where international agencies find it difficult to maintain a presence in country, new ways of contracting may be appropriate. In CAR, the World Bank works through ‘force accounts’ which allow more flexible contracting arrangements – especially where it is not clear initially what the precise quantity of work will be. For small infrastructure projects delivered through public works programmes, for example, the works may be small and scattered. Force accounts can make it easier to work through local partners with greater flexibility, but require high levels of trust, performance measures focused on outcomes rather than output, and strong mechanisms for accountability between donors and local NGOs and CSOs.

**PRACTICAL TIP*****Use tripartite stakeholder configurations where national capacity or international agency presence are limited***

There are alternatives to delivering through government where there is limited capacity. Gentilini et al. (2018) suggest that new forms of contracting and partnership arrangements – for example the World Bank and the UN, or tripartite arrangements between bilateral and multilateral agencies plus government – might prove useful though they also note the importance of further codifying, adapting and institutionalising these procedures.

An example of this tripartite is found in Yemen. Since March 2015, World Bank operations in Yemen operated under OP 7.30 (the policy relating to Dealing with de facto Governments) and all disbursements and all missions to the Republic of Yemen were suspended and staff evacuated. To maintain operations, the World Bank worked through UNDP – which oversaw project implementation on its behalf on the ground and transferred funds received from the World Bank to the executors – the Yemen Social Fund for Development (SFD) and the Public Works Program (PWP). Key for international agencies is the fact that the SFD is a public institution, albeit with substantial autonomy from government, and with whom international agencies have worked for more than two decades, primarily delivering social protection interventions.

REFLECTION:

Government ownership and leadership of SPaN should be the first port of call, but there are other options where governments have limited capacity or are predatory.

Involving citizens and CSOs – finding the right level of participation

The importance of people in local communities as stakeholders is increasingly recognised. However, although there has been substantial attention paid to participation, consultation and accountability where social protection is delivered in development settings, there is far less work on participation and consultation in humanitarian situations.

‘engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards’

(UNISDR 2015, p.10).

In emergency contexts, the time pressure to save lives is often assumed to be at odds with the time frames over which effective consultation and participation in decision-making can take place. But what is realistic and useful? In practice (and given that such a large share of humanitarian response takes place in the long term), Oxfam and Concern suggest that although ‘in-depth consultation can be constrained in a rapid on-set emergency, in repeated programmes ... it should be possible to consult at a more meaningful level’ (Oxfam and Concern, 2011, p. 34). Evidence from operations suggests that seeking to reach Rung 3 (informing) on a ladder of participation (Figure 2) by more effectively communicating information about humanitarian transfers can make a substantial difference to the effectiveness of social protection in rapid onset emergency contexts.

‘Transparency and communication with beneficiaries and other stakeholders, including open discussion of timelines and plans for discontinuation of interventions is important in all settings. Trade-offs between potential benefits and consequences of community engagement in targeting and implementation may be important to consider on a case by case basis’ (Doocy and Tappis 2016: 57).

Opportunities to move further up the ladder depend on bringing together stakeholders well in advance of a disaster or crisis so that they can have a say in decision-making but there are good examples of how this contributes to better programme outcomes. For example, in Concern's cash transfer following election violence in Kenya, involving the community in targeting decisions was found to be key to the programme's success (MacAuslan, 2010).

Figure 2: The ladder of participation

Source: Adapted from Arnstein (1969) from 'The Citizen's Handbook'



REFLECTION:

the protracted nature of many humanitarian responses allows for local level stakeholders, including communities themselves, to be far more engaged in planning, managing and implementing social protection transfers.

The lack of ownership by local partners is not simply confined to programmes led by national governments or international humanitarian agencies. While international NGOs are often credited with doing more than other international actors to empower people locally, this does not appear to translate to emergency social protection. Experiences with Concern and Oxfam emergency cash programmes in Indonesia, Kenya and Zimbabwe suggests that local partners are rarely deployed as co-managers but rather implement the plans of international experts. This is despite the strong local knowledge and an understanding of local gender issues among local actors. The way the agencies set up, conceptualised and implemented the emergency CTs was viewed as 'disempowering' for the partners. This lack of engagement of local partners trickled down to the community. Fieldwork by Concern and Oxfam found that *'there was no sense of community participation in, ownership of, or even real understanding of the programme among either recipients of cash or the village leadership that were interviewed. This led to a general sense of disempowerment and community jealousy with regards to the intervention'* (Oxfam/Concern Worldwide 2011, p. 33).

The emphasis, particularly in WHS and the Sendai Framework, on both the prevention of humanitarian emergencies and preparedness for them, and on recovery and 'building back better' may provide an entry point for greater engagement of local actors and communities. This engagement has multiple benefits, not least the reduction of corruption. Lessons from the tsunami response in Aceh, show that *'if beneficiary participation and transparency in decision-making are promoted in the program, corruption risks are minimized. This includes public meeting, multiple signatories, and transparency boards in public locations providing grant information'* (Doocy 2008).

REFLECTION:

Actions both before and after humanitarian emergencies, such as disaster prevention and preparedness, and recovery activities, are more effective when there is strong involvement of local partners and communities.

The engagement of stakeholders to ensure gender-aware responses in SPaN

'Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations'

(UNISDR 2015: p.23)

It is important to delve more deeply into the engage of communities as stakeholders in SPaN to ensure that specific vulnerable groups are included. A number of stakeholders can play key roles in ensuring that social protection delivered across the humanitarian-development nexus is populated with gender-aware responses.

Concern and Oxfam's 'Walking the Walk' Report (2011) assesses experiences with emergency cash transfer programming in a number of countries and highlights the importance of using local partners in the design and implementation phases to ensure that programmes are gender aware and gender responsive. At the design phase they argue that local partners can

ground and supplement gender analyses that are often carried out using the universally applied models and metrics of international agencies and ensure the active participation of women in design. During implementation local actors can support targeting and communications. The report notes that there was some involvement of local partners in Kenya and Indonesia, but that more could be done to ensure a gender-aware design.

REFLECTION:

Local women's organisations and women's ministry have a key role to play as stakeholders encouraging women's participation in programme design, planning, distribution and ongoing management.

Investing in systems in advance

The contrast between drought response in Ethiopia and earthquake response in Nepal highlighted above provide salient lessons about the importance of investing in systems in advance. The limited role of expanded social protection in Nepal following the 2015 earthquake, does not mean that humanitarian responses can only be delivered through existing social protection systems where the shock is slow onset, but it does highlight the importance of having resources pre-positioned, procedures in place, and roles of specific actors defined before a shock occurs. There is broad agreement from a range of countries and contexts that 'the time required to set up systems for delivery of cash at scale should not be underestimated' (Doocy and Tappis 2016: p. 58). Where programmes have been successful in transferring international humanitarian assistance onto national social protection systems they have a number of features: first, they are usually long-standing, well-established systems and programmes that deliver the basics well; second, they have often had a strong donor support for the design and resourcing of adaptive and flexible elements; and, third, they have established registries of poor and vulnerable beneficiaries.

For some actors, particularly those in the humanitarian sector, it can be difficult to prioritise these sorts of investments and activities – especially with other pressing priorities. However, the increasing prevalence of climate change-related shocks and the increasingly protracted nature of crisis suggests that establishing and institutionalising stakeholder partnerships well in advance of a shock is now as important as shock response itself.

REFLECTION:

Delivering social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus requires investments to resource adaptive and flexible social protection, including the institutionalisation of stakeholder roles, responsibilities and delivery systems.

Delivering SPaN across borders

A core challenge for delivering social protection in crisis is how to support households that have been displaced across international borders. While this may occur following a natural disaster, in practice, it is far more common in situations of violent conflict, especially where the government is a party to the conflict. Displacement – such as South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, Afghans in Pakistan, and Syrians into Turkey and Jordan – is increasingly protracted (i.e. lasting 5 years or more).

The challenges are exemplified in Lebanon where many millions of Syrian refugees (the Lebanese Government stopped its official count when it reached one million) have fled, seeking to escape violent conflict in their home towns and villages. SPaN Case Study 18 articulates the challenge as follows: while *'Lebanese communities sympathise with the plight of refugees, their tolerance is strained by rising poverty and a worsening labour market which impedes Lebanon's capacity to host and absorb Syrians. While refugees are not segregated within camps, support for refugees and host communities operates through separate systems, and refugees and host populations receive uneven assistance. Perceptions of unfairness in the way 'others' are treated, and between those selected and excluded by an inaccurate targeting approach which uses a cut-off based on a one-time scoring of households' assets and means, give rise to socio-economic tensions and political unease'* (EC 2018c, p. 1).

Further challenges in Lebanon which are common elsewhere include coordination among donors providing humanitarian assistance, the reluctance on the part of some donors to support social protection in a relatively developed country, and a lack of portability of support from any existing programmes in the country of origin. Global conventions and commitments on social protection (including those in the SDGs) do little to help, particularly because the language in the [Social Protection Floor](#) focuses on entitlements as prescribed in national law which, in turn, means support for citizens rather than refugees.



PRACTICAL TIP

Delivering social protection to those displaced across international borders depends on harmonising international assistance with national social protection entitlements

The steps under way in Lebanon show how progress might be made towards delivering social protection in contexts of mass displacement across borders. On the humanitarian side, there have been substantial efforts to provide a single payment mechanism for multi-purpose cash transfers. These will continue alongside donor-supported efforts to extend coverage of Lebanon's existing programmes – the National Poverty Targeting Programme – which provides vouchers to unemployed citizens. The principle is not to merge the two programmes but to harmonise – particularly targeting and payment levels – in order to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities. Other harmonisation efforts include using the same case workers for refugees and vulnerable or poor households in host communities.

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Knowledge gaps and outstanding questions

Much of the current knowledge about stakeholders for delivering social protection across the humanitarian-nexus focuses primarily on using existing social protection systems to deliver an emergency humanitarian response. But the relationship is not one-way and there are outstanding questions about how far humanitarian actors can and should contribute to using social protection to build resilience in advance of an emergency. There is a growing evidence base on how social protection can help recipient households reduce their exposure to a hazard or shock, or buffer themselves against its worst impacts, but the roles of humanitarian actors in supporting this process is far less clearly articulated and is a key gap in knowledge to support effective policies and programming.

There is also a limited knowledge base to support decisions about when it is appropriate and how to harmonise social protection for refugees and poor and vulnerable households in host communities. This depends on: the scale of displacement and the extent to which it is protracted; the coverage, features of existing social protection in the host country; the capacity and willingness of host governments to absorb a refugee caseload into existing programmes, and the willingness of international donor agencies to resource this. Experience is growing – in Uganda, Pakistan, Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon – but more evidence is need to help decision-makers better understand the pros and cons of various options.

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Principles, recommendations and conclusions

Various recommendations flow directly from the lessons outlined above, but there are further principles and recommendations that are worth stressing in conclusion:

No one size fits all – Disasters take many forms – ‘small-scale and large-scale, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks’ (UNISDR 2015, p. 11) — and there are multiple hazards across multiple sectors. Responses will be successful only when they identify appropriate configurations of stakeholders for different types of risks, different contexts and different levels of capacity among stakeholders.

Build on what is already there, rather than crowding out or creating parallel systems. The principle of ‘government-owned, government-implemented’ should always provide a starting point but it should be recognised that there are many circumstances (particularly in cases of violent conflict) where alternative configurations of stakeholders, perhaps without government at the centre, are required.

Objectively assess the capabilities and limitations of all actors (and interrogate our perceptions about them). The international humanitarian sector in particular appears to mistrust government systems – especially their capacity and accountability. Some of this may be legitimate and some may represent a reluctance to work in new ways with new partners, or a ‘corporate culture and a common assumption and conviction that humanitarian assistance delivers better and faster than government systems’ (EU Reference Document 2018, p.29). A key example is the acceptance by international humanitarian agencies of paying management costs to the UN where it acts as an implementing partner, but not to accept paying relatively similar management fees to many national governments in crisis-affected countries.

Work towards capacity strengthening at national level as a key priority and responsibility of all international actors, especially humanitarian actors. As the Sendai Framework notes, international actors can play a critical role ‘in addressing economic disparity and disparity in technological innovation and capacity among countries, it is crucial to enhance technology transfer, involving a process of enabling and facilitating flows of skill, knowledge, ideas, know-how and technology from developed to developing countries’.

Work towards shared long-term goals by establishing shared ways of working (standard operating procedures) in the shorter term – building effective delivery systems in partnership (Gentilini et al. 2018) by sharing information, beneficiary selection, and payment systems and other operational elements goes a substantial way towards attaining long-term coherence in policy goals and activities and building national capacities.

Incorporate the principles of adaptive programming into operations – in particular, to reflect that the configurations of stakeholders and implementing partners may change rapidly and be difficult to keep track of. This means inserting opportunities for reflection in the programme cycle, assessing whether the theory of change underpinning the action still holds, and revising roles and responsibilities accordingly.

Put the principles of non-competition among stakeholders centre stage in social protection, especially among international development agencies. While working collaboratively rather than competitively characterises many NGOs and humanitarian actors, at present, agencies working on social protection are highly competitive – strongly advocating for their preferred instruments (e.g. categorically targeted versus poverty targeted programmes, or conditional versus unconditional programmes).

Document lessons (both successes and failures) and share knowledge more widely between all stakeholders. The, on-the-ground, situations in which stakeholders seek to operationalise the delivery of social protection across the humanitarian-development is characterised by inconsistencies and contradictions. In fragile and conflict-affected situations in particular, it is not the case that ‘all good things go together’ (Zaum et al. 2015). As a result there are trade-offs that stakeholders must navigate together – for example, between the best way of delivering social protection to support state capacity versus state legitimacy – and, realistically, between the principles and recommendations presented here. Ultimately, making decisions about the configurations of stakeholders that will best contribute to delivering social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus depends on navigating these trade-offs. And doing so effectively depends as much on understanding the social, political, cultural and economic context as it does on technical knowledge about social protection itself.

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